

Comments from:
J.C. Holt, Chairman
Tri-States Rabbit Growers Association

The next "Farm Bill" should include wording to designate rabbits as an agricultural commodity. There are basically 2 groups of rabbit growers and they could be identified separately in the farm bill.

1. pet/show rabbit growers. This group includes those growing for the pet market and those growing for show. These rabbits should not be considered as commodity rabbits or designated as a "farm commodity"
2. meat rabbits. These rabbits are grown for meat production. Both human and animal consumption are the focus of meat rabbit production and should be considered as a commodity falling under the USDA Federal Meat Inspection Act when processed.

The designation of rabbits will assure a steady, safe supply of high quality meat products for the American consumer.

The U.S. rabbit industry continues to grow and is developed in an environment free of Viral Hemorrhagic Disease. Imports from countries that have the disease should be curtailed. USDA inspection at the point of entry should take place on each shipment entering the U.S. food chain from any foreign source.

A second group of rabbits to prevent from entering the US market are those countries using serological disease management. These rabbits are vaccinated with life disease agents and therefore when placed with rabbits not vaccinated become carriers of the disease.

We in the US rabbit industry want to continue marketing our rabbits as naturally or organically grown.

The original sponsoring partner for the Tri-States Rabbit Growers Association was the USDA Resource Conservation and Development group. Without their help, we could not have organized our association, sought grants, developed a business plan or begun to train our growers. The RC&D continues to support us as we develop into a regional industry.

RC&D must be preserves as a viable USDA program and must be funded at a level that allows them to provide fully staffed technical and financial assistance to emerging programs such as ours.

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